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**Connecticut Farm Bureau Association**

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**Testimony in : Support of: Raised Bill No. 1078 AN ACT INCREASING THE GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT OF VEHICLES HAULING AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES.**

Submitted by: Henry N. Talmage, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

*The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.*

Senator LeBeau, Representative Perone, and members of the Commerce Committee,

The Connecticut Farm Bureau strongly supports SB 1078 because it provides a mechanism for Connecticut farmers to better compete with producers from other states and regions. The Governor's Council on Agricultural Development recently concluded a year-long study on the challenges and opportunities facing the growth of Connecticut agriculture. Perhaps not surprisingly, the very high cost of doing business in Connecticut was identified as a serious barrier to the growth of agriculture. Transportation cost of agricultural commodities in particular was identified as a serious problem and increasing truck weight limits for agriculture is included in the initial recommendations outlined in the Council's First Annual Report soon to be released.

The maximum gross vehicle weight (that of the vehicle itself combined with that of the load it carries) permitted on Connecticut highways is currently 80,000 lbs. Neighboring states permit up to 100,000 lbs. The difference between Connecticut's limit and those of surrounding states puts Connecticut farms at a competitive disadvantage. It takes more trucks to carry agricultural commodity inputs, such as bulk fertilizer and livestock feed, into the state, and more trucks to carry commodity outputs, such as fruits and vegetables, forest products, plants and milk, out of the state.

Every extra truckload adds to the price of doing business in Connecticut, and adds to the price of every agricultural product produced in the state. For example, dairy farmers are required to pay for the transportation of their milk, and the wholesale price they receive is set through federal milk marketing orders, this additional cost comes directly out of the farmer's bottom line. In addition, bulk milk tanker trucks are designed to carry 100,000 lbs. but they can only be filled part way to travel in Connecticut. This causes the contents—such as milk—to slosh around and make the truck unstable, posing a safety risk to the driver of the truck as well as to everyone else using the road.

As an important enhancement of the bill, we encourage the Committee to adopt language that would allow for bulk fertilizer and finished feed to be included in the definition of agricultural commodities for the purpose of this law. These important farm inputs are greatly impacted by the weight limits and result in higher production costs for our growers. Putting Connecticut farms on an even playing field with those in neighboring states will make them more competitive in the regional, national, and global marketplace.

We therefore urge the adoption of this important legislation.